

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 596

CS 217 712

AUTHOR Fowler, Elaine Danielson
TITLE The Effects of Four Writing Strategies on Fifth Graders' Production of Written Ideas across Three Aims of Discourse.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 8p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Grade 5; *Instructional Effectiveness; Intermediate Grades; *Writing (Composition); *Writing Processes; Writing Research; *Writing Strategies
IDENTIFIERS *Discourse Aims

ABSTRACT

A study investigated the effects of four writing strategies on fifth graders' idea production across three aims of discourse (informative, expressive, and persuasive) and the effect of gender. The four strategies tested were clustering, drawing, freewriting, and thinking. More than 100 children from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnic groups in each of the 4 fifth grade, public school classrooms participated in the study which took place in a southwestern suburban city. All members of a given class used the same strategy: Visible Drawers drew before writing their compositions; Think Timers did no overt planning, but were asked to recall and think about what they knew and might write about their topics; Freewriters produced a draft by writing continuously and as rapidly as possible throughout prewriting sessions; and Clusterers selected keywords or phrases to represent their topics. After strategy training, each student wrote three compositions--an expressive, an informative, and a persuasive. Compositions were scored. Data were subjected to three tests of statistical significance. All three tests indicated that Freewriters and Clusterers produced significantly more written propositions than were produced by Visible Drawers and Think Timers. However, in no case was the numerical difference between scores of these two least productive groups found to be statistically significant. Data also indicated that fifth graders can write for a variety of aims, though they tended to produce the greatest number of written ideas when writing informative papers and the fewest for persuasive. Strategies were equal for male and female. (NKA)

The Effects of Four Writing Strategies on Fifth Graders'
Production of Written Ideas Across Three Aims of
Discourse.

by Elaine Danielson Fowler

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to
improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this
document do not necessarily represent
official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND
DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS
BEEN GRANTED BY

E. Danielson Fowler

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

The Effects of Four Writing Strategies on Fifth Graders' Production of Written Ideas Across Three Aims of Discourse.

Elaine Danielson Fowler

Introduction. Writing can be a tricky business for anyone, but especially for young children. Until the 70's, little attention was paid to what students actually did when they wrote their papers. However, renewed attention resulted after studies were conducted by Britton (1970) and Emig (1971). In her study, Emig interviewed 12th graders as they wrote and studied the prewriting processes that one student used in depth. At the same time, Britton and his colleagues examined 2,000 essays written by British high-school students and found that students' writing processes differed according to the type of writing. Later, Donald Graves (1975) examined young children's writing and found that seven-year-olds, like high-school students, used a variety of strategies as they wrote. He recognized that children appeared to go through three general stages in writing: prewriting, writing and postwriting. As a result of Grave's research, the writing process, as we know it, was identified. The writing process has been defined as a way of looking at writing instruction in which the emphasis is shifted from students' finished products to what students think and do as they write. As a result of these important studies on writing processes, teachers all over the United States and elsewhere paid more attention about what their students were doing to produce a final product.

Among the important ideas that emerged from these studies was the importance of providing students with strategies for prewriting. Some authorities say that the best thing writers can do is spend time and energy thinking about their topic before they start putting pen to paper or fingers to keyboard. Prewriting is often neglected, but it is crucial. According to Donald Murray (1982), 70% or more of writing time should be spent in prewriting. As a result, teachers at all educational levels--elementary through college--have

provided students with various concrete, specific strategies to try such as clustering, free writing, interviewing, listing, drawing, brainstorming, A student in my graduate class asked me several years ago if any of these strategies had been studied quantitatively in any way. And we agreed that most of the strategies originated from common sense or from observations about what worked or didn't work. Her question resulted in this interesting study.

Methodology. This study investigated the effects of four strategies on fifth- graders' idea production across three aims of discourse (informative, expressive and persuasive) and the effect of gender. The four strategies tested were clustering, drawing, freewriting, and thinking. All 100+ children from varied socioeconomic backgrounds and ethnic groups in each of four fifth-grade, public-school classrooms participated in the study which took place in a southwestern, suburban city. The classes were heterogeneous with students randomly assigned to the various teachers. In the study, all members of a given class used the same strategy. Visible Drawers drew before writing their compositions and could see their drawings later as they wrote their compositions. Think Timers did no overt planning, but were asked to recall and think about what they knew and might write about their topic. In effect, Freewriters produced a draft by writing continuously and as rapidly as possible throughout the prewriting sessions inscribing as many of their topic-related thoughts as possible which they could refer to as needed during the study. Clusterers selected a keyword (or a short phrase) to represent their topic, wrote it in the center of a blank sheet of paper and framed it with an encircling line. Other words or phrases presenting related ideas of phenomena then were written the space around the keyword encircled and connected to related ideas with a line. After being taught their respective strategy and to write for various aims, the students each wrote three compositions: an expressive, an informative and a persuasive composition. One researcher was responsible for supervising all the writing sessions.

A modification of propositional analysis was used to score the 294 compositions written by the 98 children who were present for all six sessions (training and writing). Guided by the practical manual developed by Turner and Greene (1977) that provides explicit directions for analyzing text into propositional forms, papers were scored by raters for the number of written ideas the children expressed. The data were subjected to three tests of statistical significance. The study used a two-factor analysis of variance design with repeated measures on one factor. The fixed factors were drawing and discourse topic with the repeated measure being discourse topic which allowed for examination of the student's writing performance across the three aims of discourse.

Results. All three tests indicated that Freewriters and Clusterers produced significantly (.05) more written propositions than were produced by Visible Drawers and Think Timers. Two of the tests indicated that the Freewriters produced significantly more written ideas than were produced by Think Timers. Regardless of the aim for which the children wrote, Think Timers and Visible Drawers were always the least productive groups. However, in no case was the numerical difference between scores of these two least productive groups found to be statistically significant. The data also indicated that fifth-grade children can write for a variety of aims, although they tended to produce the greatest number of written ideas when writing informative papers and the fewest for persuasive. No statistically significant differences were found between the means of males who used a given strategy and the means of females who used that same strategy

Discussion. These findings were interpreted as evidence that using either the Clustering or Freewriting Strategy can increase the number of written ideas that fifth graders can produce. One possible reason for this is because these two strategies help students to remain task-focused because they call for production of a tangible, enduring graphic/product to use as a referent when writing. Conversely, Think Timers may have produced so few ideas because their strategy did not call for them to produce a tangible, enduring prewriting product, the result being that their thoughts tended to wander. Visible

Drawers may have produced fewer ideas because, while their strategy did call for production of a tangible and enduring product, they may have invested considerable time and effort in adding to or otherwise changing their drawings. To the extent that they did, they may have been left with relatively little time and effort to invest in the generation and contemplation of ideas for writing. It could also be true that the Visible Drawers were writing about content that was more complex and abstract than can be represented in a drawing. For example, the concept of patriotism would be difficult to directly represent in a picture. If Think Timer's thoughts focused on matters unrelated to their writing and if Visible Drawers neglected contemplation of writing-related knowledge, then these two groups have been somewhat impoverished in comparison to those students in the two most productive groups.

To whatever extent a given strategy was successful, that strategy was equally successful for both males and females. Interestingly, gender studies specifically focused on the relationship between drawing and writing (Millard, 1997) found that boys tended to work more quickly and sketchily when using drawing as a prewriting strategy while girls laboriously colored to create static individualized images or characters. Girls tended to draw stylized images of children, houses and flowers to provide decoration rather than attend to key aspects of the text in question. Girls in Millard's study spent time on decoration and embellishment, while boys focused on action, cartoon figures and scenarios. However, an in-depth analysis on gender differences and drawing strategies was not conducted in this study.

Implications for Practice. Three implications from this study are (a) that certain kinds of pre-writing planning strategies **do** support increases in fifth graders production of written propositions; (b) that asking children to produce a **tangible** pre-writing product can provide a powerful incentive for students to remain task focused; and (c) that the particular nature of the strategy probably makes a difference in how children will use the prewriting planning time. That is, the nature of the strategy probably helps determine

whether students will (a) use the prewriting time for idea generation as the Freewriters and Clusterers appear to have done, (b) or let their thoughts wander in non-task related ways as Think Timers appear to have done or (c) neglect recall and idea generation while focusing primarily on the prewriting strategy itself as the Visible Drawers appear to have done plus the fact that phenomena that are abstract and not visibly perceptible tend to be difficult or impossible to represent in a drawing. As the Think Timers demonstrated, students may not plan just because time is set aside for planning or because they are advised to do so or even if writing materials are withheld in an effort to induce prewriting planning. These measures in combination appear to have induced relatively little idea production for the Think Timers. This means that suggesting to students that they just sit there and think about the topic they want to write about may not be as helpful as another strategy.

If students use the freewriting strategy, which was a successful strategy for generating ideas in this study, they must be taught how to expand their notes when writing the second or follow-up texts so that their papers, based on the notes, are richer than were the original. Teaching time needs to be taken to show students how to glean ideas from their freewriting.

Like the freewriting strategy, the clustering strategy was successful in eliciting the production of ideas. At least two other variables add to the appeal of this strategy. The clustering strategy provides writers with a visual record of those terms they will probably use to represent their ideas and the configuration of the cluster also highlights relationships that can and do exist. That apparently gives students a head start on the ideas and the organization of the paper.

Flower and Hayes (1977) have suggested that all writers benefit from being able to call forth and use a number and variety of strategies. Indeed, nothing more than the novelty of being able to vary activities may stimulate students' imagination and efforts. That being true, teacher may want to instruct students in the use of these and other prewriting strategies.

References

- Britton, J. (1970). Language and thought. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Emig, J. (1971). The composing processes of twelfth graders. Champaign, IL. National Council of Teachers of English.
- Flower, L. S. & Hayes, J. R. (1977). "Problem-solving strategies and the writing process." College English, 39, 449-461.
- Graves, D.H.(1975). "An examination of the writing processes of seven-year-old children." Research in the Teaching of English, 9, 117-241.
- Millard,E. (1997) Differently Literate: The Schooling of boys and girls. Falmer Press: London.
- Murray, D. H. (1982) Learning by teaching. Montclair, NJ: Boynton/Cook.
- Turner, A. and Greene, E. (1977). The construction and use of a proposition text base Technical Report. No. 63. Boulder, CO: Institute for the Study of Intellectual Behavior.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IMPROVEMENT (OERI)
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

PLEASE RETURN TO:

ERIC/RCS
2805 E. 10th St.
Bloomington, IN
47408

REPRODUCTION RELEASE (Specific Document)

CS 217 712

I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION

Title: The Effects of Four Writing Strategies on Fifth Graders' Production of
Author(s): Written Ideas Across Three Aims of Discourse
Corporate Source (if appropriate): Elaine Danielson Fowler (author)
Publication Date: _____

II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, Resources in Education (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche and paper copy (or microfiche only) and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the options and sign the release below.

CHECK
HERE



Microfiche
(4" x 6" film)
and paper copy
(8 1/2" x 11")
reproduction

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

(PERSONAL NAME OR ORGANIZATION)

(AS APPROPRIATE)

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

OR



Microfiche
(4" x 6" film)
reproduction
only

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY
HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

(PERSONAL NAME OR ORGANIZATION)

(AS APPROPRIATE)

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits. If permission to reproduce is granted, but neither box is checked, documents will be processed in both microfiche and paper copy.

"I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction of microfiche by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries."

Signature: Elaine Danielson Fowler
Organization: The University of Texas at Austin

Printed Name: Elaine Danielson Fowler

Address: S2B 404 - Univ. of Tx. at Austin
Austin, Tx Zip Code: 78712

Position: Assoc. Prof.
Tel. No.: (512) 471-4381
Date: 10-1-01

III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (Non-ERIC Source)

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, or, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents which cannot be made available through EDRS.)

Publisher/Distributor: _____
Address: _____
Price Per Copy: _____ Quantity Price: _____

IV. REFERRAL TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER

If the right to grant reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:



CLEARINGHOUSE ON READING AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS

Indiana University
Smith Research Center, Suite 150
2805 East Tenth Street
Bloomington, Indiana 47405
(812) 335-5847

MEMO

TO: Program Participants
NCTE Spring Conference
April 6-8, 1989

FROM: Nola Aiex, ERIC/RCS Coordinator of Documents

SUBJECT: Submitting Papers to ERIC

If you presented a paper at this convention, ERIC/RCS is very interested in reviewing it for possible inclusion in the ERIC database. Part of this procedure includes requesting permission from the authors to reproduce their material. In order to save time for all concerned, we are including this request with this mailing.

If you would like to submit your document for consideration, please fill out the reproduction release form on the reverse side of this letter, and send it along with two clean, standard-type dark-print copies of your paper to my attention. Entering a document into the ERIC system in no way affects your copyright or your right to submit it for publication elsewhere.

An abstract of your document will appear in ERIC's monthly journal of abstracts, *Resources in Education*, three or four months after we first receive it. Your paper will then be accessible on microfiche and/or paper copy to students, teachers, policymakers, researchers and other users of the ERIC system. (Keep in mind that your paper will be reproduced *exactly* as we receive it.) We will send you a complimentary copy of your paper on microfiche.

We would also be happy to consider any other papers you may have on hand. If you'd like more information about ERIC, please write or call. We're eager to hear from you.